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West German Confidence in NATO

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

When in May 1955 the Federal Government joined NATO, there was much opposition and dissatisfaction voiced within West Germany about this action. It was only during the recent election campaign that some of it was stirred up again. Because of this fact it was felt that there would be interest in West German attitudes towards NATO. The findings of this report, however, are not influenced by election campaigning since they are based upon surveys the latest of which was made in May 1957.

The May 1957 survey on NATO and related issues was conducted on a probability sample of 1,200 West Germans, 21 years of age and older. In this report the main findings on NATO were supplemented by those of previous studies, in order to show trends. Interviewing for all surveys was conducted by DIVO, Marktforschung - Meinungsforschung - Sozialforschung, Frankfurt am Main/Bad Godesberg, a German survey organization.

S U M M A R Y

Slightly more than eight out of ten West Germans have heard or read of NATO today. Awareness increased considerably within the last two years with the principal gains coming from those previously least informed.

Confidence in NATO was hurt by the Hungary and Suez events. It is, however, slowly increasing again. Those who favor European unification (and most West Germans do) are the ones who exhibit the most confidence in NATO's ability to defend Western Europe. Another significant point was the finding that it is the "neutralists" in the East/West competition who have the least confidence in NATO.

Fear of a new world war in the next few years is rather low, with those expressing the highest confidence in NATO showing the least fear of war.

I. Awareness of NATO

MORE THAN EIGHT OUT OF TEN NOW AWARE OF NATO ...

There is a high awareness of NATO among the west German public today. Within the two years after gaining sovereignty, there has been a considerable increase in the proportion of the population having heard or read of the organization. More than eight out of ten people 21 years of age and over are aware of it (82%).

These findings should be compared with those of a survey which was made in August 1955 right after that historic event. The figures indicate that an additional 18 per cent of the population has learned about NATO within this period of time.

"Have you heard or read of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization - NATO, that is?"

	August 55 (865)	May 57 (1200)
Yes, have heard	64%	82%
No, have not	36	18
	100%	100%

THOSE FORMERLY LEAST INFORMED SHOW BIGGEST GAINS IN KNOWLEDGE ...

Two years ago a considerable gap in awareness was found between the opinion-leading elements and the less informed population groups (e.g. women, those with the least education, the lower occupation and income groups). This gap, however, is now very small, since the less informed population groups have made proportionally larger gains in knowledge.

(See table on next page.)

Those who have heard or read of NATO
by personal characteristics

CHARACTERISTIC	No. of cases Aug 55	No. of cases May 57	August 55	May 57	Increase
Sex:					
Men	390	531	84%	93%	+ 9
Women	475	669	48	73	+ 25
Age:					
21 to 29 years	140	231	72%	84%	+ 12
30 to 64 years	608	846	65	82	+ 17
65 years and over	117	123	51	75	+ 24
Education:					
No school/elementary school	734	987	59%	79%	+ 20
Secondary school/trade school	105	154	92	95	+ 3
High school/ university	26	59	96	98	+ 2
Socio-Economic Status:					
Upper middle and well-to-do	76	129	94%	96%	+ 2
Lower middle	494	816	67	83	+ 16
Poor	295	255	54	69	+ 15
City Size:					
Less than 2,000	239	347	53%	76%	+ 23
2,001 to 5,000	160	151	66	80	+ 14
5,001 to 20,000	112	160	58	86	+ 28
20,001 to 100,000	108	192	65	84	+ 19
100,001 and over	246	350	73	85	+ 12
Land:					
Schleswig/Holstein, Hamburg, Bremen	63	106	75%	83%	+ 8
Lower Saxony	161	171	62	78	+ 16
North Rhine/Westphalia	229	356	68	85	+ 17
Hesse	91	100	74	76	+ 2
Rhineland/Palatinate	35	80	60	83	+ 23
Baden/Wuerttemberg	122	169	64	84	+ 20
Bavaria	164	218	55	80	+ 25

II. Trends in Evaluation of Effectiveness of NATO

Strictly speaking, it is not possible to have trends in evaluation of NATO since different questions have been used over the years to elicit opinion on this subject. Seldom has the identical wording been used a second time.

Nevertheless, it is felt that study of the various questions furnish some insight into general attitudes existing at the time. In other words, by observing whether there are more favorable or unfavorable replies to each question, the extent of the positive or negative feeling concerning NATO can be determined.

IN 1951 AMONG MINORITY AWARE OF NATO THERE WAS SLIGHT TENDENCY TO RATE IT POORLY ...

The majority of those who were aware of NATO did not give it much credit in 1951. One-fourth (26%) thought it was functioning well as contrasted with one-third (35%) who thought it was functioning poorly, while an even higher percentage among those knowing of NATO had no opinion (39%). Thus by subtracting the 26 per cent with a positive opinion from the 35 per cent with a negative opinion, it is possible to derive a net opinion score of -9. (This device permits comparisons with other questions.)

"Do you have the impression that the Organization of the North Atlantic Pact Nations functions well in general, or not?" (Asked of all aware of NATO = 46% of total.)

	December 51 (365)
Functioning well	26%
Functioning poorly	35
No opinion	39
	100%
NET OPINION	-9

IN 1955 OPINION OF NATO SHOWED SLIGHT PLUS ...

Four years later, in August 1955, two months after sovereign West Germany joined NATO, those aware of NATO's existence were again asked for their general evaluation of NATO. The majority of those expressing an opinion gave favorable replies. Almost one-third of these knowledgable people felt that NATO was doing well (31%) as contrasted with one-fifth (22%) who felt it was not doing so well or was doing badly. Of at least equal importance in assessing public evaluation of NATO is the large proportion (almost half) of "knowledgeable" people who are unable to assess NATO, i.e. have no opinion as to how well it is doing.

This time when determining the net opinion a figure of +9 is obtained - to be contrasted with the previous score of -9.

"All things considered, do you think NATO has done well, not so well, or badly up to now?" (Asked of all aware of NATO.)

	August 55 (558)
Well	31%
Not so well	17
Badly	5
No opinion	47
	100%

NET OPINION +9

1956 AND 1957 OPINION SHOWS VERY SLIGHT VARIATION ...

As figures of the May 1957 survey reveal there has been a slight increase in confidence in NATO among the West German public during the six months since the 1956 survey. While in De ember 1956, shortly after the Hungary and Suez crises, the majority of those who expressed their opinion thought NATO was in a poor condition (34%), six months later a similar percentage (34%) said that they thought NATO was in a healthy condition. About one-third of all respondents in both surveys still withheld their opinion.

In terms of net opinion it means that the Suez and Hungarian events wiped out the previous slightly favorable opinion (+ 9) resulting in a mildly negative stand (- 2), but by May 1957 most of that loss was regained (score +5).

"Is it your impression that at the present time NATO is in a healthy condition or a poor condition?"
(Asked of all aware of NATO.)

	December 56 (883)	May 57 (982)
Healthy condition	32%	34%
Poor condition	34	29
No opinion	34	37
	100%	100%
NET OPINION	-2	+5

In May 1957 the unfavorable answers are considerably more widespread among the better informed groups - the men, the better educated and the higher income groups - than among the general population.

Residents of Southwest and South Germany, including Rhineland/Palatinate, Baden/Wuerttemberg and Bavaria evaluate NATO's condition more negatively than those in the North do.

"Is it your impression that at the present time NATO is in a healthy condition or a poor condition?" (Asked of all aware of NATO.)

	Healthy condition	Poor condition	No opinion	No. of cases
All West Germans	34%	29%	37%...100%	982
Sex:				
Men	37	38	25	495
Women	32	19	49	487
Education:				
No school/elementary school	34	27	39	777
Secondary school/trade school	38	34	28	147
High school/university	33	48	19	58
Socio-Economic Status:				
Upper middle and well-to-do	34	40	26	124
Lower middle	36	29	35	681
Poor	30	20	50	177
Occupation (Respondent):@				
Professionals	37	48	15	54
Businessmen	40	25	35	57
White-collar workers	33	32	35	224
Independent artisans	41	31	28	51
Manual workers	37	27	36	352
Farmers; famrhands	32	23	45	97
Others	29	25	46	147
Age:				
21 to 29 years	34	27	39	193
30 to 64 years	36	29	35	697
65 years and over	28	32	40	92
Party Preference:				
SPD	33	32	35	270
CDU/CSU	40	27	33	368
FDP	35	39	26	65
Other parties	27	41	32	48
No party	29	26	45	158
No opinion/No answer	31	17	52	73
Land:				
Schleswig/Holstein, Hamburg, Bremen	39	28	33	88
Lower Saxony	39	21	40	134
North Rhine/Westphalia	38	26	36	301
Hesse	45	34	21	76
Rhineland/Palatinate	30	33	37	66
Baden/Wuerttemberg	26	33	41	142
Bavaria	27	33	40	175

@ Housewives have been classified according to chief breadwinner's occupation.

ABOUT SIX OUT OF TEN HAVE SOME CONFIDENCE IN NATO (IN 1957)...

When in May 1957 those who were aware of NATO were directly asked for their confidence in NATO as a defense organization for Western Europe, six out of ten (63%) indicated that they had a "great deal" or "some" confidence in it - with most selecting the more modest reply or "some" rather than a "great deal" of confidence. That means, of course, that about one-third still do not have much confidence in NATO's defense capabilities.

"In light of all you have heard up to the present time, how much confidence do you have in the effectiveness of NATO as a defense organization for Western Europe - a great deal, some, not very much, or none at all?" (Asked of all aware of NATO.)

	May 57 (982)
Great deal	28%
Some	35
Not very much	20
None at all	7
Don't know	10
	100%

REASONS FOR INCREASING AND DECREASING CONFIDENCE ...

There is a slightly larger percentage who said that their confidence in NATO went up lately (21%) as contrasted with those who felt it went down (16%). Most respondents (41%), however, indicated that their confidence remained unchanged, while 7 per cent said that they never <u>had</u> any confidence in thise organization in the first place.

"Has your confidence in NATO gone up or down lately?" (Asked of all aware of NATO.)

	May 57 (982)
Up	21%
Down	16
Remained same	41
Never had any	7
Don't know	15
	100%

The main reasons causing gain or loss of confidence were factors arising out of NATO's supposed attitude in the Hungarian and Suez conflicts.

"Has your confidence in NATO gone up or down lately?" (Asked of all aware of NATO.)

IF "Up":
"Why has it gone up?"

	May 57 (199)
Reasons for Increase in Confidence	
NATO intervened in the Suez conflict and averted war	19%
General Speidel was appointed a member of the NATO command	19
There is a better cooperation between NATO members	19
NATO will be strengthened through the German defense contribution	5
Other answers	19
No opinion	19
	100%

"Has your confidence in NATO gone up or down lately?" (Asked of all aware of NATO.)

IF "Down":
"Why has it gone down?"

	May 57 (159)
Reasons for Decrease in Confidence	
NATO proved unable to prevent the Suez crisis	36%
NATO neglected to intervene in Hungary	21
Other answers	36
No opinion	7
	100%

NATO BENEFITS THROUGH BEING A EUROPEAN INSTITUTION ...

It will be well for NATO to emphasize the angle that it is a supranational organization - a precursor of European unification. Such a picture would do most to help NATO gain prestige among West Germans who are overwhelmingly in favor of European unification.

Cross-tabulations show that supporters of European unification efforts are twice as likely to have more confidence in NATO than those who are against unification, or those who are still undecided. (68% as contrasted with 35% and 39%).

"Are you, in general, for or against making efforts toward uniting West Europe (including Great Britain)?"

"In light of all you have heard up to the present time, how much confidence do you have in the effectiveness of NATO as a defense organization for Western Europe - a great deal, some, not very much, or none at all?" (Asked of all aware of NATO.)	For (827)	Against (68)	Don't know (87)
Great deal	32%	10%	10%
Some	36	25	29
	68	35	39
Not very much	19	42	11
None at all	5	19	15
Don't know	8	4	35
	100%	100%	100%

WHERE CONFIDENCE IN NATO IS LOW, NEUTRALISM IS HIGH ...

At the present time not even one out of a hundred West Germans (less than one half of one per cent) would want West Germany to be on the side of the East. Slightly more than one-third (34%), however, are unable to choose sides between the East and the West, inasmuch as 27 per cent prefer neither side and an additional 7 per cent by being unable to give an answer to the question showed themselves to be essentially neutral. That leaves a clear majority of 66 per cent who felt that West Germany should be on the side of the West.

"At the present time, do you personally think that West Germany should be on the side of the West, on the side of the East, or on neither side?"

	May 57 (1200)
West	66%
East	*
Neither side	27
Don't know	7
	100%

Cross-tabulation of confidence in NATO with their position in the East/West ideological struggle reveals a significantly high measure of correlation. Those who have great confidence in NATO are least likely to think West Germany should be neutral (17%) whereas a majority (55%) of those with no confidence in NATO prefer Germany to adopt a neutral role.

"At the present time, do you personally think that West Germany should be on the side of the West, on the side of the East, or on neither side?"

"In light of all you have heard up to the present time, how much confidence do you have in the effectiveness of NATO as a defense organization for Western Europe - a great deal, some, not very much, or none at all?" (Asked of all aware of NATO.)

	West	East	Neither side or Don't know	No. of cases
Great deal	83%	-%	17%...100%	277
Some	69	1	30	347
Not very much	57	-	43	192
None at all	44	1	55	69
Don't know	66	1	33	97

* Less than one half of one per cent.

Another way of examining this relationship is to present the percentages in the other direction. Now, if we direct our attention only to those 27 per cent who think West Germany should be on neither side, we find that even half of them have at least some confidence in NATO, even though almost as many expressed little or no confidence in it at all (43%).

	West (676)		Neither side (265)		Don't know (37)	
Great deal	34%	70	16%	51	14%	44
Some	36		35		30	
Not very much	16	20	30	43	8	16
None at all	4		13		8	
Don't know	10		6		40	
	100%		100%		100%	

(The 4 respondents who answered "the East" have been omitted due to the small number of cases.)

GENERAL SECURITY SYSTEM (INCLUDING U.S. AND U.S.S.R.) AND NATO EQUALLY POPULAR ...

A general security system including the U.S. amd the U.S.S.R. - an idea popular at the time of Geneva - is found to have slightly more appeal for the West Germans than NATO has (29% as against 26% choosing NATO) when presented as one of a list of alternatives. Much of the support for a general security system may stem from German expectations that peace and the reunification of their country would be concomittants of such a plan.

Differences in appeal between the present arrangements (26%) and a general security system (29%) are not significant, however, and when further analyzed reveal that those who favor present arrangements and the ones who favor a general security system are both favorably inclined towards NATO.

The West European alliance and the neutral belt concept have little attraction for West Germans today (7% each), while a withdrawal from all alliances is favored by one out of ten (11%).

"Under present circumstances, which one of these do you think is the most practical way for West Germany to ensure its security?" (CARD)

(1) To continue present arrangements for Western defense based on alliance with West European countries and the U.S.

(2) To form an alliance limited to West European countries only

(3) To arrange a general security system including the U.S.A., Russia and other European nations

(4) To seek a general security agreement based upon a neutral belt of central countries including Germany and the East European nations like Czechoslovakia and Poland

(5) To withdraw from all alliances.

	May 57 (589)
The most practical way is:	
General system including U.S. and Russia	29%
Present arrangements (NATO)	26
Withdrawal from all alliances	11
West European alliance only	7
Neutral belt	7
Other (volunteered) What? ...	*
Don't know	20
	100%

* Less than one half of one per cent.

ONLY AMONG THOSE FAVORING WITHDRAWAL FROM ALL ALLIANCES DOES LESS THAN A MAJORITY HAVE CONFIDENCE IN THE EFFECTIVENESS OF NATO ...

NATO's standing among West Germans can perhaps best be shown by the finding that even majorities of those who would favor other than the present defense arrangements expressed rather high confidence in it (51% - 78%).

Only among those who would like withdrawal from all alliances does less than a majority reveal confidence in NATO (45%).

Despite the fact that majorities express confidence in NATO, considerable variations between the groups are still to be seen. By subtracting the percentages with little confidence in NATO's ability to defend West Europe from those who have confidence, a net opinion score permits easy group comparisons.

Those who selected "present arrangements" (NATO) from the list of alternatives not only have the largest percentage of favorable responses, but they also have the highest net opinion score (+ 60). Those who chose a general security system or a West European alliance are revealed to be very similar in their attitude towards NATO (net opinion scores of +33 and +25).

"Under present circumstances, which one of these do you think is the most practical way for West Germany to ensure its security?" (CARD)

	Present arrangements (143)	General system including US & USSR (161)	West European alliance only (34)	Neutral belt (35)	Withdrawal from all alliances (51)	Other/ Don't know (66)
"In light of all you have heard up to the present time, how much confidence do you have in the effectiveness of NATO as a defense organization for Western Europe - a great deal, some, not very much, or none at all?" (Asked of all aware of NATO.)						
Great deal	39%	24%	29%	28%	12%	11%
Some	39	40	29	23	33	23
	78	64	58	51	45	34
Not very much	14	24	24	26	23	18
None at all	4	7	9	17	18	11
	18	31	33	43	41	29
Don't know	4	5	9	6	14	37
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
NET OPINION SCORE	+60	+33	+25	+ 8	+ 4	

III. German Fear of War

FEAR OF WAR RETURNS TO LOWER PRE-CRISES LEVEL ...

About one out of ten West Germans (11%) still thinks that war is likely to occur within the next three or four years. Fear of war, however, is less than that found after the 1956 crises. At that time 16 per cent of the population feared that war was likely.

The decrease of fear is most evident when one compares the percentages of those who felt that a new war was improbable or that there was no danger at all. (38% in December 1956 as against 51% in May 1957.) Opinion in May thus returned to its approximate position before the two world crises of the preceding Fall.

"Now I would like to get your ideas on the danger of a world war in the next three or four years. Here is a sort of thermometer. (CARD)
Will you please show me how you rate the danger of such a war?"

	December 55 (813)		December 56 (589)		May 57 (611)	
Danger of world war within the next three or four years:						
War is certain (100°)	1%	8	5%	16	3%	11
..... probable (70°-90°)	7		11		8	
..... possible (40°-60°)	27		37		28	
..... improbable (10°-30°)	29	49	18	38	25	51
No danger at all (0°)	20		20		26	
No opinion	16		9		10	
	100%		100%		100%	

A close relationship between fear of war and confidence in NATO was found when the above question was cross-tabulated with the query on confidence in NATO's ability to defend West Europe.

THOSE EXPRESSING HIGHEST CONFIDENCE IN NATO SHOW LEAST FEAR OF WAR ...

Of all those who expressed great confidence in the effectiveness of NATO not even one out of ten (9%) felt that war was probable within the next three or four years, while two-thirds (67%) thought it improbable. If, however, we look at those who do not have any confidence at all in the organization, we find that almost three out of ten (28%) feel that another world war is probable as against not quite half (48%) who thought that the outbreak of a new war was not likely.

"Now I would like to get your ideas on the danger of a world war in the next three or four years. Here is a sort of thermometer. (CARD) Will you please show me how you rate the danger of such a war?" (May 1957)

	War is certain	War is probable	War is possible	War is improbable	No danger at all	No opinion	No. of cases
"In light of all you have heard up to the present time, how much confidence do you have in the effectiveness of NATO as a defense organization for Western Europe - a great deal, some, not very much, or none at all?" (Asked of all aware of NATO.)							
Great deal	4%	5%	21%	27%	40%	3%...100%	277
Some	1	8	33	30	25	3	347
Not very much	2	10	30	27	24	7	192
None at all	12	16	20	22	26	4	69
Don't know	1	8	25	20	20	25	97

When the December 1956 data on the danger of war question was cross-tabulated with a similar confidence question the same relationship was found. Those expressing the highest confidence in NATO were the least afraid of a new world war.

"Now I would like to get your ideas on the danger of a world war in the next three or four years. Here is a sort of thermometer. (CARD) Will you please show me how you rate the danger of such a war?" (December 1956)

	War is certain	War is probable	War is possible	War is improbable	No danger at all	No opinion	No. of cases
"What effect do you think NATO has on West European security - does it contribute a great deal, somewhat, nothing at all, or does it endanger it?" (Asked of all aware of NATO.)							
Great deal	4%	10%	44%	19%	19%	4%...100%	158
Somewhat	4	16	40	18	17	5	192
Nothing	7	29	29	14	21	-	14
Endangers it	30	-	20	20	10	20	10
No opinion	8	9	29	19	24	11	74

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